



HE CHOSE US
BEFORE THE
FOUNDATION
OF THE WORLD
TO BE HOLY
AND WITHOUT
BLEMISH BEFORE HIM

IN LOVE HE DESTINED US
FOR ADOPTION TO HIMSELF
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST IN
ACCORD WITH THE FAVOR
OF HIS WILL FOR THE PRAISE

**OF THE GLORY
OF HIS GRACE**

THAT HE GRANTED US
IN THE BELOVED

LENT 2014

CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY AT PENN STATE

SEASON OF LENT

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

DAILY MASS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

9.15A HOLY FAMILY CHAPEL **PCC**

5.05P EISENHOWER CHAPEL **PSC**

FRIDAY MEDITATION CHAPEL **PSC**

9.15A • Mass

Following Mass until 5.15P • Adoration

5.15P • Benediction / Prayer / Communion

STATIONS OF THE CROSS MARCH 21 – APRIL 11

Fridays • **12.15P** EISENHOWER CHAPEL **PSC**

6.15P HOLY FAMILY CHAPEL **PCC**

LENTEN LUNCHESES MARCH 19 – APRIL 9

Wednesdays • **12.10P** (Service) EISENHOWER CHAPEL **PSC**

Followed by a Lenten Lunch GARDEN ROOM **PSC**

PENANCE SERVICE

March 31 • **7P** WORSHIP HALL **PSC**

OPERATION RICE BOWL

Help support global food programs and alleviate poverty by contributing money during Lent. All funds collected go straight to Catholic Relief Services | www.crs.org

AGE-OLD WISDOM FOR LENT

In the Rule of St. Benedict (6th Century), the Founder of my religious order writes:

...we urge the entire community during these days of Lent to keep its manner of life most pure and to wash away in this holy season the negligences of other times. This we can do in a fitting manner by refusing to indulge evil habits and by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial. During these days, therefore, we will add to the usual measure of our service something by way of private prayer and abstinence of food and drink, so that each of us will have something above the assigned measure to offer God of his own will *with the joy of the Holy Spirit*. 1 THESS 1:6 In other words, let each one deny himself some food, drink, sleep, needless talking and idle jesting, and look forward to Holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing. RB 49.1-10

With the joy of the Holy Spirit let us embrace the grace of this special season and, mindful of our “negligences,” let us open our hearts more fully to the transforming power of God’s love through the Risen Christ.

— **Fr. Matthew Laffey** OSB **DIRECTOR** CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY

All the reflections contained in this book were written by members of the Catholic Campus Community at Penn State—undergraduate and graduate students, alumni and community members who worship with us, people preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church, faculty, university employees and ministry staff. They reflect the rich variety of Catholic spirituality, reminding us that we are diverse companions on the same journey.

The reflections correspond to the day's Gospel, cited at the top of each page. This collection is designed to be used hand-in-hand with the scripture reading, connecting the Lenten walk of our community with the Lenten walk of the entire Church. You can find each of the readings online at USCCB.org (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

We would like to extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks to all who gave their time and effort to produce this collection.

REFLECTIONS

In order to show all the activities in which our community members are involved, abbreviations have been used for the various clubs/activities:

NW | Newman — **MX** | Mission Mexico — **PH** | Project Haiti — **GG** | Grad Group
EM | Eucharistic Minister — **LR** | Lector — **MC** | Mass Coordinator
MM | Music Ministry — **KC** | Knights of Columbus — **BL** | Bread of Life

A **Ash Wednesday** 5 March

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Today marks the beginning of the Lenten season, where we are preparing for Jesus' death and resurrection. Lent is not about what you "give up," rather it is about what you do for others. Today, start by doing a kind deed in secret: say a prayer for someone, leave a nice note on a co-worker's or fellow student's desk, or go out of your way to do something kind. This Lenten season, try to continue doing kind deeds for one another. In serving others, you will find happiness and "your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Maggie Lamb MX
Class of 2015 | Communication and Science Disorders

We are called to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Christ. How can we resolve this universal vocation while trying to meet the demands associated with being a student? What do we do with our lives on earth when God calls us to look towards heaven?

I don't have an answer to either of those questions. However, my own reflections on this teaching have led me to focus more on how my work at Penn State is a blessing, a part of God's plan for me. I reflect on how my work here brings me closer to Christ, and how it draws me away from His love.

Lent presents a chance to renew our resolve to direct our minds toward the Crucifix—thinking about why we are here, how we are called to deny ourselves, and which crosses we must bear in order to truly follow Christ.

Mary Claire Doyle

EM | PH | NW

Class of 2015 | Economics & Human Dev. & Fam. Studies

We, the disciples of John, are still questioning Jesus about fasting. Fasting, the dirty word of Lent. I am never happy when I am fasting, but I am always happy to have fasted. Traditionally, it is not eating meat on Fridays, but do not think you are exempt if you are a vegetarian. There are many ways to fast, many are the pleasures we can forgo for a day to remember Jesus the bridegroom whom we lost. But when we end the fast, it is a way to celebrate what Jesus gave us for his suffering.

Kurt Engstrom
Community Member

MM

“Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do.”

Have you ever wondered why Jesus would agree to attend a “great banquet” for Him at a tax collector’s house? Levi, a tax collector in this none-too-popular profession, left everything behind one day as soon as Jesus said, “Follow me.” However, when the Pharisees and their scribes found out that Jesus was at table with many tax collectors and others, they immediately complained and asked why would He eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners! The answer Jesus gave was simple: “I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

Jesus came to call us, to help us, and to save us from the many distractions and sinful opportunities that accost us each day. Will you, will I, answer Him?

Elizabeth A. Hanley
Faculty Emerita | Kinesiology

LR

1 **First Sunday of Lent** 9 March

Matthew 4: 1-11

Jesus' encounter with the devil in the desert certainly provides an opportunity for serious reflection about how we conduct our lives. Two particular teachings stand out in my mind, one being Jesus' identity as fully human (plus fully God); the other the gift of free will and our ability to make choices. I often think about how prominent, powerful leaders – presidents, politicians, dictators, generals, CEOs, clergy, educators, the 1% – go about making important decisions. Are they listening to God or Satan? More importantly, who do we follow in our decision-making? Our culture today certainly values power, wealth, influence, gaining celebrity status, being #1, etc., over being humble and modest, showing kindness and mercy, and putting others first. Jesus, being fully human, prayed and made the conscious decision to follow God's intentions. We can do the same. As we travel through Lent, let's be aware of our seemingly small, everyday choices, and remember to pray for guidance in directing our lives and decisions toward God's ways, not Satan's.

Marty Klanchar
Faculty | Applied Research Lab

RCIA Coordinator

Mom always used to say that some of us have entertained angels unaware, and I have to wonder how many times I've entertained Jesus unaware here on campus. Then I ask myself, "Did I act with love, or did I just ignore Him? Was there anything more I could have done to honor and care for the Son of God?" But I think today's reading suggests more than just miraculously finding Jesus on the street and sharing your lunch. I believe that He calls us all to clothe and feed others, not because he might be the Son of God, but because we, the sons and daughters of God, carry the dignity and love of Jesus in our hearts. Let this Lenten season be a time for nourishing that presence of God within us all. Let's strive to be His sheep and rest with the Shepherd for eternity.

Ali Manbeck
Class of 2015 | Psychology & Pre-medicine

NW | BL

Jesus identifies with us as our brother, a brother who is concerned about our relationship with the Father and one another. Jesus tries showing us that prayer is an intimate conversation with God. He shows us that God isn't interested in hearing a lot of bombast and ceremony when we pray. He wants to hear us talk to him and with him, not at him. Jesus tells us that first and foremost, God is our Father, but not just a father. He's our Dad.

Along with that, God wants us all to get along. As our Dad, he holds us accountable for our actions, not only in saying "Sorry" to him and each other, but forgiving our brothers and sisters for what they have done to us. Do I try to make prayer something it isn't? Am I ready to forgive those who hurt me, even if it's hard at times?

In today's gospel, we find Jesus with a large crowd of people who had recently witnessed healings due to his presence. Jesus sensed they were still looking for a greater sign than those he had already given them. In frustration, Jesus said: "This generation is an evil generation: it seeks a sign but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah."

For Jonah to become the sign that was to bring the city of Nineveh to repentance, he had to undergo purgation. In that state Jonah prayed, "out of my distress I cried to you...for you cast me into the heart of the sea. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; my prayer reached you in your temple."

My God's grace lead us to a place where we can be a sign to others of His presence.

David Nice
Community Member

RCIA

1 Thursday
13 March

Matthew 7: 7-12

I love this Gospel reading for today because it truly shows us how God loves us and how He wants us to be in union with Him. He wants us to talk to Him about our needs, dreams, and desires and to ask for them. His answers may not be what we expect, but He only does what is best for us all. Also, we may have to wait for his answer because the timing is not right and only He knows what is truly best for us. He wants us to pray constantly and to ask him everything that is on our heart. Since God treats us in this loving way, so we should treat our brothers and sisters in the same way. Today and throughout this Lenten journey, may we pray constantly to the Heavenly Father who loves us dearly and who desires us to love and treat our brothers and sisters like the Heavenly Father would.

Brittany Antolick
Class of 2015 | Landscape Contracting

BL

This passage reminds us of the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness. In it Jesus tells his disciples that they must follow an even more encompassing interpretation of the Commandments. While their ancestors learned that it was wrong to kill, Jesus tells his disciples that their hearts must also be pure of violence, hatred, and anger. These feelings, as well as the existence of conflict in their own human relationships, drive a wedge in their relationship with God.

When we recite the Lord's Prayer together at Mass, we acknowledge this reality when we say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Today, let's examine our own relationships. If we've been holding on to a grudge or haven't truly accepted someone's apology, let's take the time to resolve these conflicts. This act will prepare our own hearts to accept God's love and mercy.

Kate Slavens
Staff | Clinical and Translational Science Institute

LR

1 **Saturday**
15 March

Matthew 5: 43-48

The Lenten season is an opportunity to reflect on ourselves and our relationship with God. As I start my Lenten journey I reflect on the actions of myself and of the people around me. Through my experiences in Project Haiti I've learned to look for Jesus in the people I meet. Rather than giving something up for Lent, I try to do something to better myself. By loving others, even enemies, we can better ourselves and our Catholic community.

Catherine Malizia
Class of 2015 | Biobehavioral Health

PH

Imagine describing a human being transformed into God. We would not have the words. Our language can do no more than express what is in our minds, and our minds are constrained by our humanity. Little wonder that the chosen apostles, who had the unique human experience of seeing the divinity of Christ, groped for a description. They glimpsed heaven. Christ pulled them above human life to give them respite, and courage, and hope in what awaited them. Christ offers all of us glimpses of heaven. He allows us to transcend our lives in those brief, unexpected times when we feel only His love and peace. We cannot stay in those moments—we cannot build tents. But if we have faith, we can recognize them as God's gift, and we can accept them as a promise of things to come the glory of which we cannot truly imagine.

J. E. Lopatka
Faculty

LR
| A. Robert Noll Distinguished Professor of Law

We are challenged to love others as God loves us. Not just our friends, family and those we admire and respect. Jesus is specific in calling us to act with compassion and understanding to *all* we encounter. As disciples of Christ, our call is to be compassionate, do not judge others, do not condemn, forgive offenses done to you, and give without expecting anything in return. On any given day, there are times I fall short of this goal. When I spend more time in prayer and reading Scripture, it helps me respond more positively in daily encounters with others. It takes effort and intention to choose love in thought, word and deed. How we respond is up to each of us. Every day brings many opportunities to show love in action. What will our choice be?

Jeanne Klanchar
Community Member

RCIA | EM

Today in the reading, Jesus asks us follow him, but with a humble heart. When we go to Mass, participate in fasting, or join in almsgiving, it is easy to forget their real purposes. They are all designed to lead us to a more intimate relationship with Jesus, not get us caught up in the “how long or how much” questions. Jesus Christ knows our hearts and asks that we give them to him. If we can humble ourselves to selfless action for the Lord we surely “will be exalted.”

Mimi Corsetti
Class of 2016 | Mechanical Engineering

EM | NW

Let us imagine a mother desperately looking for her twelve-year-old child without being able to find him anywhere. How relieved would she feel, after three days of sleepless search, to find him alive and safe! But this feeling would also naturally be followed by sorrowful disappointment: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” Jesus’ answer, “Why were you looking for me?” would strike any parent not only as disrespectful, but also as absurd! “We were looking for you because you are our beloved son!” But that apparent absurdity was the superficial sign of a deeper mystery, the mystery of a presence so exceptional that even the teachers of the temple were “astounded at his understanding.” It is easy to imagine Mary and Joseph returning to Nazareth in a silence full of wonder, longing and gratitude for what had just happened. Even without understanding Jesus’ words, in fact, they could not help but recognize the authority of his presence. A presence so attractive and divine, in a sense becoming children of their own child, they began to follow his steps to his Father’s house.

Sara Cremonese
Graduate**Francesco Poggiani**
Ph.D. Candidate

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a parable about choices. Lazarus has his lifelong suffering redeemed, while the Rich Man suffers eternally. God turns the attitudes of the world on their head. Even the Rich Man, although he is suffering eternal torment, does not protest his position. He understands that justice has been served for himself, because he ignored the plight of Lazarus. The Rich Man pleads to God's servant, Abraham, for us. He asks Abraham for a sign. Abraham tells the Rich Man (and us) that no miracle of God can change the mind of those who have rejected him. He does not force us to serve Him. Today, most of us are the Rich Man. We are materially wealthy, and we have a faith that gives us an abundance of graces. If we fail to share this material and spiritual wealth with the Lazaruses in our lives, who are waiting to just taste the scraps from our table, God will punish us, for our God is a God of justice.

Matthew Swatski
Class of 2016 | Biomedical Engineering

NW

St. Benedict tells us that Lent is a time to “look forward to Holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing.” These are not merely the wishes of a Utopian dreamer. St. Benedict’s 6th-century world was quite similar to ours, one where everything seemed to be falling apart with the disintegration of the Roman Empire. A world where hope in peace and prosperity was giving way to despair, violence, and the loss of prosperity. Yet St. Benedict’s way prevailed in the birth of a renewed world, so that he is now honored as the Patron of Western Civilization. We, like the communities he founded, will be able to live in joy and spiritual longing, regardless of the circumstances of our lives, if we believe the Good News which Jesus proclaims. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his disciples and tells us that we can receive the gift of living in him just as he lives in God, the Father: “I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.” Jn 15:11 Lent is a time of spiritual longing for the gift of a deeper trust in the words that Jesus speaks to each of us. In this faith and life in the Risen Lord, we will experience the gift of unconquerable joy and peace which surpasses understanding.

Rt. Rev. Douglas Nowicki OSB
Archabbot | St. Vincent Archabbey

Today's gospel tells the parable of the prodigal son. We all know this story and, ultimately, I think of it as one of forgiveness not just by the father but by the brother as well. As a parent, it is pretty easy to forgive (well, at least I think so) but I have a much harder time forgiving my "brothers"—co-workers, friends, even strangers. Today, I was driving home in the snow and someone passed me driving fast and recklessly. I thought to myself "it will serve them right if they go off the road and get stuck in a ditch—and I won't help them if they do!" However, these are exactly the people that we need to help and forgive—the ones that anger us, frustrate us, and even betray us. Our behavior to these people in our lives is the true measure of our character and mark us as followers of Christ.

Carolyn Mahan Engstrom
Faculty | Biology and Environmental Studies

MC

3 Third Sunday of Lent 23 March

John 4: 5-42

Out of all the theological revelation and the thousands of years of salvation history hinted at in this passage, I am awestruck by the fact that Jesus was tired. He just wanted to sit down and drink some water. How powerful it is to know that Christ dealt with the same fatigue from long days that I do. To know that He felt as a human, makes Him easier to pray to, to believe in. The Samaritan woman knew Jesus as a man first and then as the Messiah. Through her actions a town was brought to belief. This Lent I challenge you to think of Christ as a man and all the struggles that come with a human body. Those who knew Him as a man were able to convert thousands of people and die for the beliefs He taught. Those who know him as man become something more.

Brennan Heiser
Class of 2016 | Engineering

NW

In this Gospel reading, as Jesus encounters skepticism and rejection in His hometown, He recalls two cases from the Old Testament in which foreigners received the Lord's blessing instead of Israel, His chosen people. Like their ancestors, the people of Nazareth had been chosen to house a prophet among them—indeed, more than a prophet, the Messiah. The Son of God grew up among them and walked their streets for years. Yet they couldn't see what was right in front of them!

We, too, have Jesus living among us, even more deeply and intimately than in Nazareth. And too often we ourselves don't recognize Him, since He tends to be hidden in such ordinary, familiar things and ordinary, familiar people. Let us pray for the grace to look with the eyes of foreigners—to see familiar things as if for the first time, wonderously transfigured by Christ's presence.

Randi Anderson

BL

Faculty | Intensive English Communication Program (IECP)

On the day of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel appeared and said: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.”

I imagine the awe Mary must have felt that day and wonder what it would have been like to have been a part of it. How wonderful would it have been to have been able to hold the baby Jesus when he was born and be a part of his family?

Later in Luke, scripture reminds me that some thirty years after Gabriel’s message, Jesus became the living Word of God and granted not only me, but all of us that desire. On the day he was told that his Mother and brothers were outside and Jesus responds, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.”

I can be his mother? A part of his family? We all can. By doing something both easy and incredibly challenging: hearing and acting on the word of God.

“I have come not to abolish but to fulfill [the law].” Our Lord fulfilled the law in two senses. First, He taught and obeyed it. And how could He not? For the commandments of the law are not the whims of an arbitrary tyrant, but rather an expression of the very nature of God and of man, handed down through Moses out of love and concern for our ultimate happiness. Second, He brought it to completion. In the Old Covenant, transgressions against the law were atoned for by ritual sacrifices, but Christ sealed the New Covenant, and accomplished our redemption, in the sacrifice of Himself on Calvary—a sacrifice in which we become participants through the Mass. This Lent, remember how we have failed to follow and cherish God’s law, in order that we may approach Him, with humility, gratitude, and a firm purpose of amendment.

Michael Scott Brulo
Class of 2017 | Biochemistry

LR

Jesus knows that the people are amazed and uncertain about the source of his authority. Satan would not drive out demons and undo his own evil work. That would pit Satan against himself, weakening his own house by dividing it. The miracles prove that Jesus acts with God's authority. Satan is no longer safe in his palace because Jesus is stronger. It may seem safe to hold back from really believing in and following Jesus. But, there is no safe neutral position in the struggle between good and evil. Whoever is not with Jesus is against him. Satan will continue to fight, and many people will take his side. But Jesus tells us that Satan will lose. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Marie T. Reilly
Senior Associate Dean | Dickinson School of Law

LR

It's not uncommon that I'm directly challenged about my faith. As a believer, it's my duty to stand by my religion, and to share my knowledge in a way adapted to each individual who asks of it. Jesus' interaction with the scribe in today's reading provides a perfect example of fulfilling these duties. Especially if the scribe meant to test him, Jesus certainly turned the table when he evaluated the scribe's reaction, saying, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Surely it was surprising to hear such a gentle, personal response to such a formal question. Even if we're suspicious of others' hearts, if we react with affirming love to them as Jesus did to the scribe, maybe we can inspire love in their own hearts and transform skepticism into desire. Jesus' love silenced the onslaught of debate that day; he can do the same through us.

Frank Desiderio
Class of 2014 | ERM & English

NW | BL

Entrance into Heaven is not a game where one amasses points for every good deed done. There is no short cut if one follows all the “rules.” The Pharisee thought that he was doing everything right thus assuring himself a place in Heaven. But what he missed was that fact that he was placing all his trust in himself, rather than in God. If he prayed “O God, I thank you” and stopped there, a very different outcome would have been in store for him.

The taxpayer, on the other hand, had placed his trust in God. He knew he was a sinner and was willing to accept punishment for his sins asking God to be merciful. By placing his trust in God, the taxpayer was granted mercy and his sins were forgiven.

Throughout the remaining days of Lent, let us all practice humility rather than arrogance and pride thus allowing ourselves to be filled with God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Deborah Bezilla
Community Member

Campus Ministry Coordinator | MX

One sees only what one wants to see! Nowadays we use the expression “elephant in the room” for what we refuse to see! But it was the same in Jesus’ time. Jesus does an unheard of thing: he gives sight to a man who was blind from birth. The reaction?

The blind man’s friends: “It’s not him; just looks like him.”

The blind man’s parents (afraid of the Pharisees): “We know he was born blind; we know he can now see; but we don’t know who cured him.”

The Pharisees: “The man who did this cannot be from God. He healed on the Sabbath.”

How about us? Are we willing to acknowledge what is in plain sight? Or are we too encumbered by habit and pride.

Lord, give us the courage and insight of the blind man. Let us see You!

Deacon Laszlo Ivanits
Campus Ministry Staff

Linda Ivanits
Faculty

Keeping the faith is not an easy task. As we get swamped by both educational and personal issues, it's easy to slip into the mindset that God isn't really there for us. He seems so distant in times of need. *I need a sign*, we often think. I need Him to prove that He's there for me. We desperately want a miracle to justify our faith.

The amazing thing about God, though, is that He is everywhere – we just don't always take the time to notice Him. “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe.” We are surrounded by miracles every day – it's having faith first that allows us to see them. God is in the girl who holds the door for us so we don't spill our morning coffee, the stranger who offers us his seat on the bus, the roommate who leaves our favorite candy bar on our desk after a long day. He is in the warm rays of sun after a storm, the glimpse of green sprouts through a melting snow, the gentle nuzzle of a beloved pet.

God sends us miracles every day. We just have to have faith, open our eyes, and look for them.

Brigh Desjardins LR
Class of 2016 | Risk Management / Actuarial Science

Just like the man by the pool waiting for someone to carry him to the water, we can often find ourselves in difficult times needing help from others. This verse demonstrates that there are going to be times in our lives when we need another's help, someone to help lift us from the ground. We not only should ask for help, but we should provide support for those around us. Lent can be used as a time of prayer and reflection, and we should use this time to reflect on how we can make the lives of our family, friends, and even strangers richer and more fulfilling. We can use God's love and grace in each of us to positively affect those around us.

This gospel tells us that Jesus is the Son of the Father, who knows what the Father himself does, who has all the judgment, and who has the possession of life in himself.

I learn two things from this gospel. First, the relation between the Father and the Son is beyond what we can describe as “close.” The binding is too fundamental and tight for us to understand with our reasoning. An attempt to distinguish between the Father and the Son now seems meaningless.

Second, exactly from the fact that Jesus is the Christ, we know how much God loves us. Our God already knows that each of us can easily not believe in or dishonor the Father, or can conduct wicked deeds. I feel that our God sent his Son to help us overcome our weakness and refresh ourselves as his children.

Jesus tells us that we mustn't be so short-sighted as to only value the praise of others, but to think further ahead to the next world and how to best prepare ourselves for heaven by serving God here. We are so caught up in our daily grind that we forget about our eternal lives. We are quick to worship celebrities and movie stars, but hesitant when it comes to God. We often try to impress our friends, instead of looking to God for how we might please Him. This is where we can look to the Saints for guidance. They did their utmost to represent and serve God. Many were greatly persecuted and endured horrible deaths, but offered up their sacrifices for the glory of God, not worrying about thanks or approval of their peers. Just as they offered themselves in order to obtain a greater reward in heaven, we are given the same opportunities, especially during this time of Lent.

Our goal here in life is not necessarily to become rich, famous, or powerful. We cannot get bogged down in desiring the praise of others and let it cloud our sight of what is truly important: not this world, but the next.

Sara Getson
Class of 2016 | Linguistics & Applied French

NW

In this gospel, Jesus is criticized for his preaching because his hometown is known while the Christ was expected to have an unknown origin. Jesus proclaims that the people may know him but they do not know “the one who sent me”—God. During the time of Lent, we participate in many activities known to the general public: ashes, fasting, abstaining from meat on Fridays, and giving something up. While people know we do these things, many do not understand even why Lent exists—they do not understand that the purpose of our entire faith journey (not just during Lent) is to develop and grow our personal relationship with God. By living our relationship with God, we serve as witnesses to others who may only have heard of God in passing. We pray that our example can help them to truly know Jesus and the One who sent Him.

Katie Kragh-Buelow
Graduate | Materials Science and Engineering

LR | GG

How do we ever know for certain? Part of faith is believing without ever knowing for certain; that's why faith is so amazing and such a blessing. Today's Gospel depicts an interesting scene. There are people in the crowd who are doubting Jesus such as the Pharisees who are downplaying the rumors and hype of Jesus, and then there are those who believe and have faith in Jesus. The people who profess that Jesus is the Christ, have strong faith and are blessed. You have to admire Nicodemus for his faith and for standing up to the Pharisees and defending Jesus. His mind told him not to take the risk, but his heart told him to defend Jesus. Lent is a perfect time to fill your heart with love for Jesus, a time of faith and living out your faith in Jesus. How will you live out your faith this Lent?

Patrick Thorp
Alumnus | Communications

NW

5 Fifth Sunday of Lent 6 April

John 11: 1–45

“Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” With these words Christ speaks—to Martha, and also to all of us. Sometimes recognition of our own sinfulness can weigh us down. How can we, flawed human beings, ever attain holiness? Every time we fail, our salvation may seem more and more an impossibility. But Jesus gives us hope that, with grace, we will see the glory of God—that sin does not bind us and that evil does not triumph. Without this hope, we are like the man Christ talks about who walks at night and stumbles “because the light is not in him.” But with hope, we can break free from despair. And like the one who walks during the day, we will find the light that will lead us to our heavenly home, where we will see God’s full glory.

Julian Fung
Graduate | English

MM

The story of “A Woman Caught in Adultery,” contained in the Gospel of John, is a lesson that teaches us to not cast judgment and to show forgiveness. In verse 7, Jesus states, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” As imperfect beings, this tells us that we should strive to follow to teachings of the Church ourselves, and, as members of the Catholic community, support the faith of others and help build upon the Church. This also goes along with the forgiveness aspect of the story. The best way that we can support our fellow brethren is to forgive those who have wronged us. This Lenten season, I plan to use the words of John’s Gospel and strengthen my relationship with God, taking heed to Jesus’ conclusion, “Go and from now on do not sin any more.”

Blaine Prichard
Class of 2017 | Engineering

NW | KC

These verses talk about how people did not believe Jesus, how he was sent from Above to save those living on Earth from sin. The way I can relate this to modern times is trust. Jesus is asking them to trust his word; that he is indeed sent from our Father to tell the world of His Word. There is nothing that Jesus can do physically to show them that he is the Son of God.

Today we are sometimes asked to believe in things that we cannot see. For example, most people do not get the opportunity to see a third-world country with their own eyes. However, they can witness it on the news or attend a fundraiser and hear about what it is like there from those who have traveled and worked there. Although they do not physically see the starving and the needy, they can trust the word of the volunteers and try to understand the struggle that those people have to go through. The volunteers share their stories and pass the word in an attempt to make known the struggle and better the lives of those living in third-world countries.

When Jesus went to some of the Jews, they did not even recognize him as the Son of God; they were trying to kill him. They stated that they only had one father, God. They didn't understand that the Father sent Jesus to teach the love and workings of the Father. Jesus told them that they must remain in his word and if they do they will be his followers, sons of the Father, and truly and eternally free. To me, to remain in Jesus's word is to follow his teachings and live a life following God and fulfilling his spirit. Jesus may not always seem apparent to us, and his will may not be super clear, but He is here with us always, teaching and guiding us along the path to salvation. We must be ready, willing, and attentive to receive his presence.

Jesus was speaking in figurative language so the assumption of absolute truth won't hold. The Jews did not quite understand what Jesus was saying so they asked some simple but loaded questions to tease out the answers they wanted based on their assumptions about God. Jesus immediately pointed out that they did not know God. This showed that their line of questioning would not lead them to the truth since it was based on false assumptions. In engineering, checking the assumptions is an important and necessary step. If the assumptions are not satisfied, then start over at first principles. In religion this idea means to get to know God and his ways of doing things. God loves us all and wants us to love everyone freely. He does not mean for us to have to suffer and die but allows suffering and death so that we can experience God's love.

The religious leaders charged Jesus with blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus defended His claim by quoting the Psalms and making a statement. He was consecrated by God to be a free offering for God. Jesus did this by being sent to the world to carry out God's mission. Jesus spoke of God consecrating Him for this mission of salvation - to deliver us from sin and condemnation. By doing this, Jesus challenged the leaders to accept His works if they could not accept His words. Jesus also calls us to live out His works by our own faith every day. Live Jesus' witness in your lives, and work towards Him. Stay strong not only in the this Lenten season, but every day on this wonderful journey of life. Give Him your full potential and always seek God's face in whatever you encounter.

Matthew Himes
Class of 2014 | Mechanical Engineering

NW

In this part of the gospel, we observe how Jesus was sacrificed because others didn't want his popularity to grow. They didn't want to lose power. Nowadays, people also make unjust decisions to prevent the loss of power or to earn more power (either with laws, money, or the like). Without looking at anyone else, but looking inside ourselves, we should pray and ask for strength to battle what we know are our weaknesses. Pray and ask for strength to always make the right decisions—decisions that help us move towards God and not away from him. After all, we are here to be well with God and not with the world.



Our bodies and the physical world around us limit the aspirations of our spirits, as can be seen in today's Gospel reading. Judas sold out his leader, lover, and best friend for thirty pieces of silver. The disciples could not stay awake less than an hour for Jesus. Peter denied his master three times because he feared for his own life. The people in the crowds barely knew Jesus, but they had a wild man set free instead of him because they were bribed to do so. All of these instances show how too often we let our bodily and human wants and desires overcome our spiritual needs. Today, in our materialistic society, we see things relevant to this issue every day. Fortunately, Jesus showed us how to spiritually overcome our bodies...with the help of God. Jesus was betrayed, whipped, scorned, crucified, and stabbed, but He never lashed out. Instead, He prayed.

Cody Stubbs**Class of 2017** | Veterinary and Biomedical Studies

MX

Ever since I lost the role of Mary in an elementary school play to someone more dramatic, the story of Mary and Martha has challenged my understanding of what it means to be a good Christian. I am not, by nature, a “Mary.” I am a “Martha.” Yet, while my compulsion is to focus first on responsibilities rather than live in the moment, I find the juxtaposition of these two sisters a necessary reminder of the kind of joy that characterizes purity of faith. Mary, in this reading, not only anoints Jesus using costly oils, she dries his feet with her hair, thus casting aside valuables and vanity, and instead devotes herself completely to Jesus. When I feel myself becoming absorbed in routines and obligations, I remind myself to be more like Mary—to lose myself in the joy of Christ’s love, soaking up his presence by denying my own compulsions.

Michelle Kaczmarek
Graduate | English

GG

After Jesus announced that one of his own would betray him, today's Gospel tells us: "The disciples looked at one another, at a loss to whom he meant." I often feel similar to the disciples in this Bible verse: unable to fathom ever betraying Jesus, especially in those moments when he holds me so close to him, such as while in Mass or in prayer. Just as Peter's imperfection shows through his betrayal, we are also not perfect in our relationship with God. Worldly pursuits tug at our hearts and distance us from the one thing that will bring us pure and everlasting happiness: God's love. Whether we struggle with letting go of hurt and bitterness from the past, showing kindness to an enemy, refraining from gossip, or even abstaining from giving worth to ourselves and others based on physical appearance, we all do things that distance us from God. However, as Jesus shows mercy to Peter for his denial, he also shows mercy to us for our own misguided actions. This Lenten season, welcome that everlasting love and unfailing mercy into your heart, and along with your chocolate and junk food, give up those demons that distance you from your unwavering best friend: Jesus Christ.

Talia Follador
Class of 2016 | Nutritional Sciences

LR | NW

We often put Judas up there with some of the biggest sinners, thinking that nobody could be so cruel as to betray Jesus Christ. However, what we don't often realize is how we betray Jesus as sinners.

So many times we try to justify sinning by convincing ourselves, "Everyone else does it" or "Just this one time" or something else along those lines. In Judas's case: "Sure it is not I, Rabbi?" The truth is, every time we sin, we betray Christ. He loves us enough to let us have free will, though we are all born with the inclination to sin, just as Judas was.

We need to be more conscious of our choices, and to choose not to sin. Jesus gives us the chance not to, so we can follow Him and spend eternity in the Kingdom of Heaven. He did the same for Judas.

Tonight marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum, our three-day remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. Knowing that he is about to suffer and die, Jesus celebrates the Feast of Passover with his closest friends and disciples. During his last meal, Christ washes the feet of each of his disciples, even Judas', who will betray him. He teaches his disciples (and us) to serve others humbly as he has served them. During the events that follow on Good Friday, this instruction becomes more profound as Christ suffers and dies to serve and save humanity.

How could we possibly follow Jesus' example to become humble servants? The answer rests in what we celebrate tonight: we can become transformed into a humble servant to others through the grace we receive in the Body and Blood of Christ. Let us pray that God may strengthen us to be Christ-like servants to all.

Tom Riley
Class of 2014 | Bioengineering

NW | MC

As I read today's gospel, I continually noticed the fear that was present in everyone except Jesus. Jesus is being summoned to crucifixion and death yet remains calm and peaceful through it all. Jesus relied on his trust in God's plan, which gave him the courage to get through his death as a human. For me, this reading reminds me of how important it is to rely on God's plan for us, especially during times of suffering and fear. If we trust in God's love, he will give us the strength and courage to get through anything. When we forget to do this the fear will creep in. It is then that we must remember how Jesus completely trusted in God. Let us place our lives in God's hands and rely on Jesus' strength to do God's will.

“Do not be afraid.”

While those four words did not, and will not, absolve all feelings of discomfort in my life, it did awaken in me a sense of hopefulness and underlying relief. It says to me that, while it's okay to be fearful of challenges and the unknown, having faith in His words will bring peace of mind, heart, and soul.

I assimilate entering into Catholicism the same way the women left Jesus' tomb: fearful yet overjoyed. But as they knew then, and I know now, God is greater than any fears, or insecurities, or worries. Simply put, God is greater than everything, and with Him, anything and everything, is possible.

Stephanie will be baptized tonight at the Easter Vigil Mass. Please pray for her and all our Catechumens and Candidates this evening.

Stephanie Lefler
Class of 2014 | Psychology

RCIA

E **Easter Sunday**
20 April | The Resurrection of the Lord

John 20: 1-9

One morning a young boy found his three older brothers eating breakfast. He reached for a box of cereal on the kitchen table and found it was empty. And he quickly discovered that nothing was left in the other boxes. He cried out, "Is everything empty around here?!" On Easter morning some disciples of Jesus found his tomb was empty and it only added to the empty feeling that came with his death on the cross. But little by little the disciples began to experience a fullness that comes from the joy of the Gospel and they cried out, "Christ is risen! He has appeared to Simon!" That Good News went viral as more and more disciples began to recognize Jesus in the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread. At Easter and always, go and seek the fullness that we experience in the Church through Word and Sacrament. Tell others, "Everything is not empty around here!" Introduce them to the risen Christ who welcomes us to share in the fullness of his eternal life. It's a life full of joy and hope!

Most Rev. Mark L. Bartchak
Bishop | Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Congratulations
TO OUR
NEOPHYTES
who entered our Church at
the Easter Vigil Liturgy

KEEP THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS

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HOLY WEEK

HOLY THURSDAY 7P

GOOD FRIDAY 2.30P

EASTER VIGIL 8.15P

EASTER 9.30A 11.30A

PENANCE SERVICE
MARCH 31 7P

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